

Parks to Relinquish Management of Hell Creek

FROM BETSY KIRKEBY
FOR THE COURIER

Montana State Parks (stateparks.mt.gov) announced today that the Division will relinquish management of Hell Creek State Park when the site lease agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) expires in 2021. The decision was approved by the Montana State Parks & Recreation Board at their Dec. 16 meeting.

Earlier this year, the Division contracted to create the Hell Creek State Park draft Management/Site Plan in an effort to identify management options for the site. The plan indicated multiple management, facility and health and safety concerns that are not up to the standards of a state park indicated by the

Montana State Parks Strategic Plan.

As part of the Strategic Plan, the Division is in the process of implementing a new Classification Policy which reallocates staff and funding resources to the system's most significant sites in order to ensure those parks meet the Montana State Park brand promise. Montana State Parks recognizes the value of Hell Creek State Park for the region, the state, and within the state park system. However, the considerable management, facility condition, and health and safety challenges at the park identified by the draft plan cannot be adequately addressed with existing state park resources.

After considering the Hell

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8B- THE GLASGOW COURIER, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2015

Hell Creek

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Creek draft Master/Site Plan and public comment, Montana State Parks has decided to proceed to manage Hell Creek State Park with minimal infrastructure improvements to meet health and public safety objectives through the end of the lease agreement which expires in April, 2021. At

that time management of the site would return to the USACE.

The Montana State Parks & Recreation Board will revisit this decision in 2019. In the meantime, the Division will continue to look for new funding sources for Hell Creek State Park including increased funding for Montana State Parks from the state's General Fund as well as funding partnerships

with federal land managers. If funding for the park system improves by 2019, the decision to let the lease expire could be reversed.

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ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
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Exhibit 11